

Message Text

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ACTION EA-10

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CJCS WASHDC

CINCPAC HONOLULU HI

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USDAO PHNOM PENH

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SUBJECT: REFUGEE SITUATION IN WAKE OF RECENT KC ATTACKS

REF: USDAO 0002 O-P 020400Z JAN 75

SUMMARY: ENEMY ATTACKS AROUND PHNOM PENH IN THE LAST TWO DAYS HAVE FORCED OVER 13,000 PEOPLE TO BECOME REFUGEES. MANY OF THESE PEOPLE HAVE ONLY RECENTLY BEEN RESETTLED, AND ARE REFUGEES AGAIN, INDEED MANY FOR THE THIRD TIME. ALL REFUGEES RESETTLEMENT PROJECTS IN THE NORTHERN DIKE AREA AND ALONG ROUTE 5 NORTH OF PHNOM PENH WHICH HAVE BEEN BUILT UNDER THE AID REFUGEE PROGRAMS UNDER GRANTS TO THE VOLUNTARY AGENCIES HAVE BEEN ABANDONED FOR THE TIME BEING. PERHAPS MORE IMPORTANTLY, THE RECENTLY INAUGURATED PROJECTS AIMED AT DRY SEASON RICE CULTIVATION NORTH OF PHNOM PENH HAVE ALSO BEEN ABANDONED. THESE PROJECTS WERE UNDER THE AUSPICES OF THE RESETTLEMENT AND DEVELOPMENT FOUNDATION AND SHOWED LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PROMISE OF PROVIDING UP TO 50,000 M/T OF RICE FOR

PHNOM PENH. THE VOLUNTARY AGENCIES, WORKING WITH THE MINISTRY OF REFUGEES AND USAID/KHMER REPUBLIC, ANTICIPATE THAT THE RELIEF ASPECTS OF THIS NEW INFLUX OF REFUGEES CAN BE HANDLED AND THEY ARE PREPARING TO BEGIN WHATEVER RELIEF DISTRIBUTIONS MAY BE NECESSARY. STABILIZATION OF THE MILITARY SITUATION WOULD PERMIT RETURN TO FARM AND RESETTLEMENT AREAS BUT THE PSYCHOLOGICAL IMPACT OF THE RECENT ENEMY ATTACKS IN THE SAME AREAS AS LAST YEAR WILL TEND TO BE AN INHIBITING FACTOR. THE DRY SEASON CULTIVATION PROGRAM PARTICULARLY HAS BEEN SET BACK AS TIME IS IMPORTANT FOR ITS SUCCESS. END SUMMARY.

1. RECENT ENEMY ATTACKS AROUND PHNOM PENH HAVE DISLOCATED LARGE NUMBERS OF RURAL KHMER AND CAUSED EXTENSIVE DAMAGE TO HOUSING IN OTHER THAN RESETTLEMENT PROJECTS.

A. IN THE NORTH, ENEMY ATTACKS AROUND PREK PHNOM (15 KILOMETERS TO NORTH OF PHNOM PENH ON ROUTE 5) FORCED AN ESTIMATED 2,000-2,500 KHMER VILLAGERS AND FISHERMEN TO ABANDON THEIR HOMES AND TO FLEE SOUTH TOWARDS THE CAPITAL. MOST OF THOSE FORCED TO FLEE HAD PRIOR WARNING AND WERE ABLE TO CARRY SOME HOUSEHOLD EFFECTS AND FOOD WITH THEM. SOME WERE CAUGHT IN THE FIGHTING, HOWEVER, AND OVER 30 WERE REPORTED WOUNDED.

B. TO THE WEST, THE ENEMY ATTACKS ON ROUTE 4 NEAR ANG SNOUL (24 KILOMETERS TO THE WEST OF PHNOM PENH) FORCED ANOTHER 8,000 KHMER REFUGEES TO FLEE TOWARDS PHNOM PENH. MANY HAD NO PRIOR WARNING AND FLED WITH NOTHING. SOME NEVER MADE IT, AND THERE ARE NUMEROUS BUT UNCONFIRMED REPORTS OF KHMER COMMUNIST (KC) TROOPS CAPTURING REFUGEES AND EXECUTING THEM ON THE SPOT. MOST REFUGEE HOUSES WHICH FELL INTO KC CONTROL WERE ALSO BURNED TO THE GROUND.

C. TO THE EAST, THE ENEMY ATTACKS AROUND AREI KSAT (ACROSS THE RIVER FROM PHNOM PENH) GENERATED AN UNKNOWN NUMBER OF NEW REFUGEES. AN ESTIMATED 3,000 OF THEM FLED TO THE CHRUI CHANGWAR SECTION OF PHNOM PENH AND OTHERS CROSSED INTO CHBAR AMPEAU. MORE REFUGEES ARE CONTINUING TO MOVE INTO THE CITY AT THE PRESENT TIME. PROPERTY DAMAGE IN THE AREI KSAT AREA IS REPORTED HEAVY.

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2. SINCE THE ENEMY ATTACKS HAVE CONCENTRATED NEAR THE REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT AREAS TO THE NORTH AND WEST OF PHNOM PENH, MANY RESETTLED REFUGEES WERE HARD HIT. IN THE NORTHERN DIKE AREA, THE CATHOLIC RELIEF SERVICES (CRS) AND WORLD VISION RELIEF ORGANIZATION (WVRO) RESETTLEMENT CAMPS BUILT UNDER AID GRANTS TO THOSE VOLUNTARY ORGANIZATIONS, HAD TO BE ABANDONED AGAIN, EXACTLY ONE YEAR TO THE DAY AFTER THE ENEMY

ATTACKED AND OVERRAN THIS SAME AREA. ALONG ROUTE 4, FOR SOME REFUGEE FAMILIES FROM THE ANG SNOUL AREA, THE MOST RECENT ENEMY ATTACKS MARK THE THIRD AND FOURTH TIME THEY HAVE BEEN BURNED OUT AND FORCED TO FLE. (THE INTERNATIONAL RED CROSS (IOG) CAMP AT BEK CHAN HAS NOW BEEN BURNED FOR THE SECOND TIME AND ABANDONED FOR THE THIRD.) THOUGH MOST WILL SURVIVE THIS ROUND OF ATTACKS, THE PSYCHOLOGICAL EFFECTS LEFT BY THESE REPEATED DISLOCATIONS WILL BE HARD TO ERASE.

3. IN ORDER TO AID IN ASSISTING THE NEW REFUGEES WHILE LESSENING THE THREAT OF KC INFILTRATION, THE KHMER MUNICIPAL AUTHORITIES HAVE TRIED TO LOCATE THESE REFUGEES OUTSIDE OF PHNOM PENH PROPER. ON BOTH ROUTES 4 AND 5 THE LOCAL KHMER GENDARMERIE HAVE BEEN CHECKING ALL REFUGEES AND DISCOURAGING THEM FROM MOVING INTO THE CAPITAL. MOST AGREED AND HAVE STAYED ON THE OUTSKIRTS OF TOWN. ON THE RELIEF SIDE, THE MINISTRY OF REFUGEES INITIALLY WAS SLOW TO REACT TO THE INFLUX OF NEW REFUGEES, BUT NOW THAT MINISTER KONG ORN HAS RETURNED FROM KOMPONG SOM, THEY HAVE STARTED TO SEND OUT THEIR REGISTRATION TEAMS. THE VOLUNTARY AGENCIES UNDER AID GRANTS ALSO HAVE THEIR TEAMS WORKING WITH THE NEW REFUGEES AND ARE AT THE SAME TIME COLLECTING RELIEF SUPPLIES. THEY WILL PROBABLY START DISTRIBUTIONS ON SATURDAY, JANUARY 4TH, BY WHICH TIME THEY HOPE THE MILITARY SITUATION WILL HAVE STABILIZED. THOUGH THE FINAL STATISTICS ON THE CYW REFUGEES HAVE NOT YET BEEN COMPILED, THE VOLAGS FEEL THAT THEY WILL BE ABLE TO MEET ALL OF THE EMERGENCY RELIEF REQUIREMENTS.

4. OVERALL, THE EFFECT OF THE RECENT ENEMY ATTACKS ON THE VOLUNTARY AGENCY RESETTLEMENT PROGRAMS HAS BEEN HEAVY INDEED. THE ACTUAL PHYSICAL DAMAGE TO HOUSING AND EQUIP-LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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MENT OF THESE PROGRAMS HAS NOT BEEN EXTENSIVE-THE CRS CAMPS AT STUNG KAMPOT AND PHUONG PHNOM, ALONG WITH THE WVRO RESETTLEMENT CAMP AT TUOL SAMPEAU ARE ALL ABANDONED BUT STILL STANDING- BUT PSYCHOLOGICAL DAMAGE HAS BEEN EXTENSIVE. AFTER THE ENEMY ATTACK ON THE NORTHERN DIKE LAST YEAR, THE REFUGEES AT THE WVRO TUOL SAMPEAU CAMP REFUSED TO RETURN TO THERE UNTIL OVER THREE MONTHS AFTER THE ENEMY HAD BEEN FORCED OUT. NOW, AFTER HAVING FLED FOR THE SECOND TIME FROM THE SAME PLACE FOR THE SAME REASON, IT IS DOUBTFUL THAT ALL WILL RETURN.. IF THE REFUGEES ARE RELUCTANT TO LEAVE PHNOM PENH BECAUSE OF INSUFFICIENT CONFIDENCE IN THE MILITARY SECURITY, THERE IS NOT MUCH THE VOLAGS CAN DO TO IMPLEMENT A RESETTLEMENT PROGRAM.

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5. IN ADDITION TO GENERATING THOUSANDS OF NEW REFUGEES AND DISRUPTING THE VOLAG RESETTLEMENT PROGRAMS, THE ENEMY ATTACKS ON JANUARY 1ST HAS ALSO BROUGHT MOST OF THE RESETTLEMENT AND DEVELOPMENT'S DRY SEASON PRODUCTION CAMPAGIN TO A SUDDEN HALT. AS HAS BEEN MENTIONED BEFORE, THE U.S.-SUPPORTED RDF HAS TAKEN THE LEAD IN ALL REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT IN THE KHMER REPUBLIC AND DURING THE FIRST NINE MONTHS OF EXISTENCE RESETTLED OVER 45,000 KHMER REFUGEES. PRESENTLY, THE RDF IS HEAVILY INVOLVED IN AN INTENSIVE EFFORT TO EXPAND THE DRY SEASON PRODUCTION OF RICE IN THE PHNOM PENH AREA. SPECIFICALLY, THE RDF PLANNED TO TAKE 75,000 UNEMPLOYED REFUGEES OUT OF PHNOM PENH AND TO HELP THEM PLANT 16,000 HA. OF DRY SEASON RICE IN THE PHNOM PENH AREA. SINCE THE RDF PLANNED TO RELY HEAVILY ON MIRACLE RICE VARIETIES, THE TOTAL PRODUCTION WAS PROJECTED AT 50,000 M/T OF PADDY. THOUGH THE RDDPROGRAM WAS AMBITIOUS, GOOD PROGRESS WAS BEING MADE RIGHT UP UNTIL THE ENEMY ATTACKS ON JANUARY 1ST. PLOWING AND TRANSPLANTING OF THE PROJECTED 16,000 HA. OF RICE LAND WAS GOING WELL, ESPECIALLY IN THE NORTHERN DIKE/PREK PHNOU/ROUTE 5 AREA, AND ADDITIONAL SEED

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BEDS HAD ALREADY BEEN LAID DOWN. COOPERATION FROM THE GKR MINISTRY OF REFUGEES WAS GOOD AND THEY WERE LOCATING AND REGISTERING UNEMPLOYED REFUGEES WHO WANTED TO PARTICIPATE IN THE RDF PROJECT. THE VOLAGS WERE ALSO DEEPLY INVOLVED AND CRS HAD ALREADY BEGUN BUILDING HOUSES AND DISTRIBUTING FOOD TO PARTICIPATING REFUGEES IN THE NORTHERN DIKE REGION. NOW, FOR ALL PRACTICAL PURPOSES, THE ENTIRE RDY PRODUCTION PROGRAM IN THE NORTHERN DIKE/PREK PHNOM AREA AND ALONG ROUTE 5 HAS STOPPED, AND THOSE REFUGEES WHO WERE PARTICIPATING HAVE NOW FLED BACK TOWARDS PHNOM PENH. (IN TERMS OF PRODUCTION, THESE AREAS REPRESENTED 50PCT OF THE ENTIRE RDF PROGRAM.) IT IS NOW DOUBTFUL IF THIS PROGRAM CAN BE RESTARTED. THE CRUCIAL QUESTION IS TIME. THE RDF WAS WORKING ON A VERY TIGHT PLANTING SCHEDULE AND ANY DELAY WILL MEAN SIGNIFICANT LOSS OF PRODUCTION. IF FANK IS UNABLE TO SECURE THIS AREA BY THE END OF THE MONTH, IT IS LIKELY THAT THE ENTIRE NORTHERN DIKE/PREK PHNOM/ROUTE 5 RICE PRODUCTION PROJECT WILL BE SCRAPPED. THIS WILL OF COURSE HAVE A DIRECT EFFECT ON THE OVERALL RICE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE KHMER REPUBLIC.

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